

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 4TH DECEMBER, 2006

PRESENT: Councillor G Driver in the Chair

Councillors B Anderson, J Bale,
P Grahame, B Lancaster, T Leadley and
R Pryke

50 Late Items

The Chair gave notice that in accordance with his powers conferred under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, he had agreed to accept as a late item of urgent business a request from Councillors Cleasby and Pryke for an investigation into the cost of internal Council publications, on the grounds that it would speed up the legitimate business of Council and tie in with other Board work programmes (Minute No 54 refers).

51 Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

52 Minutes - 6th November 2006

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 6th November 2006 be confirmed as a correct record.

53 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Further to Minute Nos 44 and 45, 6th November 2006, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development reported that following consultation with Committee Members, arrangements were going ahead for a series of local working group meetings in connection with the 'Narrowing the Gap' Inquiry, on 11th December, 16th January and 13th February.

54 Late Item - Council Publications

The Chair indicated that Councillors Cleasby and Pryke had raised concerns regarding the nature, purpose and costs of internal Council publications and newsletters, e.g. the Development Department's 'X-Site' publication.

RESOLVED – That this matter be left to the discretion of individual Scrutiny Boards to investigate in respect of their respective areas of responsibility if they so wish.

55 Request for Scrutiny

Further to Minute No 47, 6th November 2006, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report regarding Councillor Illingworth's request for an Inquiry, broadly regarding the Council's operation of the Freedom of Information and Access to Information rules, and appending a detailed report on the same subject received by the Scrutiny Board (Transforming Services) on 23rd March 2006 and that Board's Inquiry Report subsequently published on 27th April 2006.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the Committee receive a progress report at its February 2007 meeting regarding Section 4 of the March 2006 report and also the implementation of the recommendations of the Scrutiny Board (Transforming Services) as set out in its Inquiry Report dated 27th April 2006.

56 Recommendation Tracking

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report containing proposals for improving the method and effectiveness of tracking Scrutiny Board recommendations. The report also addressed the need for Scrutiny Boards to set clear recommendations with reasonable targets for the outcome of reviews and investigations.

RESOLVED – That the proposals contained in the report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development be approved.

57 Local Government White Paper - Implications for Overview and Scrutiny

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report outlining proposals for developing the role of overview and scrutiny committees and related matters, as set out in the Government's recent White Paper on Local Government.

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion related to :-

- Scrutiny and Community Leadership, and the possibility of more area-based scrutiny, perhaps around the so-called 'community calls for action';
- The emphasis at the same time on the greater use of overview and scrutiny in policy development, and allowing local perspectives to influence decisions;
- The proposed extension of the role of local authority overview and scrutiny committees to encompass other local service providers such as the Police, the Fire and Rescue Service, the Environment Agency and the Highways Agency;
- The potential structural implications for the Council in terms of both the number and responsibilities of Boards;
- Perhaps less concentration on issue based Inquiries and more emphasis on broader-based monitoring across a range of issues;

- The need to build up trust and relationships between the Council and these other service providers, in a similar manner to which had occurred in respect of Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Board and also with the development of the Children's Trust;
- Publicising the role of Scrutiny Boards;
- The possible role of Area Committees in the scrutiny process;
- The need to review and monitor the activities of District Partnerships and the various strands of the Leeds Initiative;
- How to develop the policy formulation aspect of the overview and scrutiny function, and develop relationships with the Executive;
- The lack of discussion of Scrutiny Board issues at Full Council meetings due to time constraints.

The Chair indicated that a number of interesting ideas and issues had arisen which could form the basis for a report to a future meeting when this subject was revisited. In the meantime, he would seek a meeting with the Leader of the Council to explore all the matters raised.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

58 Financial Health Monitoring 2006/07 - Half Year Report, Financial Plan Annual Review and Quarter 2 Performance Highlight Reports of the Corporate Priority Boards

Further to Minute No 46, 6th November 2006, the Committee received and considered reports from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development and the Director of Corporate Services, together with the Quarter 2 performance highlight reports submitted to the Council's officer Corporate Priority Boards.

- (a) Quarter 2 Performance Highlight Reports
Marilyn Summers, Chief Executive's Department, attended the meeting, presented the Quarter 2 performance highlight reports and responded to Members' queries and comments.

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion related to:-

- Currently the reports were based on information submitted to the Corporate Priority Boards (CPB) but with effect from Quarter 3, Departmental information would form the basis of reports to individual Scrutiny Boards, and would provide timely, up to date information
- Modernising Our Council CPB – References made to indicators BV11a – The percentages of top 5% of earners that are women – and BV16a – The number of staff declaring that they meet the DDA disability definition as a percentage of the total workforce – and what was being done to address those two areas
- Thriving and Harmonious Communities CPB – The following indicators were discussed:-

BV174 – The number of racial incidents recorded by the authority per 100,000 population

BV212 – Average time taken to re-let local authority housing, and

BV66a – Rent collected by the local authority as a proportion of rents owed on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) dwellings

Councillors Anderson and Pryke stated that they intended to investigate such performance matters at their Board meetings.

- City Development CPB – The following indicators were discussed:
BV109(a,b&c) Planning Speed Targets – The impact on Leeds CPA score and on Leeds' status as a Planning Standards Authority of not achieving these targets was recognised.
BV204 – The percentage of appeals allowed against the authority's decision to refuse planning applications – again, the trend was worrying in terms of the Council's overall CPA score
BVCP – CU50b – Visitors to the City's cultural facilities – Sport and Active Recreation – the effect of the closure of the Art Gallery on 23rd November was referred to.
- Health and Wellbeing CPB – The following indicators were highlighted:
BV161 – The ratio of former care leavers in employment, education or training at age 19
BV217 – Percentage of pollution control improvements to existing installations completed on time
CP-EY50a and b – The number of families supported with childcare
- Children and Young People – positive feedback noted.

RESOLVED – That Overview and Scrutiny Committee's concern regarding the Council's planning performance be brought to the attention of the Council, and that the respective Executive Member and the Chairs of the three Plans Panels be invited to attend the Committee to discuss the situation.

(b) Financial Health Monitoring 2006-07 – Half Year Report and Financial Plan Annual Review

Alan Gay, Director of Corporate Services, Doug Meeson and Helen Mylan, Corporate Services Department, attended the meeting, presented the reports and responded to Members' queries and comments.

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion related to:-

- Projected overspends in the current financial year;
- The fact that as part of the new agreed process, Overview and Scrutiny Committee would in future receive quarterly monitoring reports. This would hopefully assist Overview and Scrutiny Committee to pick up any areas of concern and refer them to

individual Scrutiny Boards for consideration e.g. energy management;

- The fact that the process was attempting to link the Financial Plan more closely to the Council's corporate planning process, and to link corporate priorities to service planning and resource management;
- The Government trigger point in relation to the HRA referred to in Paragraph 4.1 of the Half Year Report – Doug Meeson undertook to supply Councillor Leadley with a detailed response to his query;
- The 'milestones' principle outlined in Paragraph 6.5 of the report and the Committee's previous suggestions regarding 'zero budgeting' exercises. Doug Meeson indicated that the Department was still developing its ideas surrounding this concept.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted and the officers be thanked for their attendance.

59 Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted the Committee's current work programme, updated to reflect decisions taken at previous meetings, together with a relevant extract of the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions and a copy of the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 15th November 2006.

The Committee decided to invite the Executive Member (Development) and the Plans Panel Chairs to a future Committee meeting(s), and to invite evidence from Leeds Initiative at the January meeting in connection with the 'Narrowing the Gap' Inquiry. Consideration of the budget also needed to be added to the February meeting.

RESOLVED – That subject to the above amendments, the Committee's work programme be approved and accepted.

60 Dates and Times of Future Meetings

Monday 8th January 2007

Monday 5th February 2007

Monday 5th March 2007

Monday 2nd April 2007

All at 10.00 am (pre-meetings at 9.30 am)